

Why I Missed You by OTTSTF

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Summary:

A moment of reflection shared. Mike helps El realise how special she's been since day one.

Why I Missed You

Author's Note:

What is "sleep"?

As usual, this thing kinda goes all over the place as it goes on.

It just kinda happens, I guess.

Having so much free time, specifically now void of worry or sorrow, has given El a lot of time to think. Think about the time spent, or lost in the cabin (ask her through different moods, and her answer to that will change).

She remembers the pain she'd felt, not being able to see her friends. Being stuck in the cabin, whilst watching Mike go through the same pain that she was. Although, not entirely the same; no. His pain was much worse.

She knew that he was alive. She could see, thanks to her abilities which she's grown to accept, that Mike was well, at least physically.

Her gift allowed her to watch as he slowly degraded, mentally. From the cheerful Mike she'd met and lived with for a week, to the angry, annoyed, grumpy, depressed Mike that developed.

But why? Why had Mike took such a turn for the worst? Will was back; she made sure of that as soon as the pursuing bad men had left her alone. Will was back, recovering; they were all back to normal.

The reason, as stated multiple times in his own words, is because of her.

Not in a bad way. Not at all. She'd done nothing wrong, ever. Mike made sure to mention this multiple times in his calls to her. No, he was depressed because he missed her. Because he wanted, *needed* to know that she was okay. But she couldn't answer him. She wasn't allowed, because it *apparently* wasn't safe to do so. So instead of providing him relief, she was forced to watch him degrade over the

three-hundred and fifty-three days they spent apart.

But now they're back together. Sorrow has ended; they're the happiest people on Earth, no matter what anyone else might say. Being able to see each-other, talk to each-other, hold each-other close, every single day, without threat, is the best feeling in the world.

But, as we started; it allows her to think about things a lot more.

Lately, she'd been wondering, more so, *why* Mike was so depressed without her.

She can't help but not understand why Mike would let himself fall into such a deep, dark pit of despair just because of her.

So the best cause of action, in her mind?

"Mike?" she whispers, attracting his attention. He lifts his head off her lap, having been close to dozing off. As much as Mike likes to have her cuddled up into him, she loves things being the other way around, too. Mike, of course, is more than happy to oblige.

"Yeah, El?" he slowly sits up, coming side-to-side with her before they both instinctively wrap an arm around the other.

"I know we don't like to talk about the time we were apart... but I've been thinking." she tells him, watching his expression for permission to continue.

"What've you been thinking?" he asks her; his eyes curiously searching hers.

"Just, how... sad, we both were." she explains. "How much you hated not knowing, and how much I hated not being able to *let you* know."

Mike ponders, biting his lip, his expression falling slightly.

"Why are you thinking of that? We're together now, we don't need to remember the pain."

"I know, I'm sorry." she nods, starting to worry that bringing this up

may be a bad idea. His eyes tell her to continue anyway, so she does.

“But, I just wonder *why*.”

“Why... what?” he asks, confused.

“Why you were so upset about losing me.” she nearly whispers; the subject a very hard one for either of them to think about, never mind talk.

“It's just... Will was back, you were all okay. Why were you so upset about me?”

He's shocked. His expression is full of disbelief. Does she really mean what she's saying?

“El... are you... are you serious?”

She knows that look; the look that tells her *she should know* .

“Okay, reverse the question.” Mike tells her. “Why were *you* so upset about not being able to see *me*?”

“Mike, I've told you lots of times.” she reminds him.

“It's not like I saved *you* from the rain or gave you your first home. I saved Will, and killed the Demogorgon. What else was there about me?”

“El...” he can't believe his ears. How could she not understand?

“I thought I made this obvious every day.”

“You *do*, Mike. I understand *now*; I've actually developed as a person now. I've grown a personality. But, back then... I didn't even know what a *friend* was, Mike. I thought you wanted me to be your *sister*.” she continues to list her reasons.

“I'm Jane Hopper *now*, sure. But back then... I was just a number, Mike. *Eleven*.”

He straightens up as she says this; his expression turning serious as he looks deep into her eyes.

“El, listen to me. I *never* want to hear you say that again, okay?”

“It's true, though...”

“No. No, that was never true and it never will be.” he insists, shaking his head.

“There was so much, even then, that you meant to me, El. Why do you think I insisted on showing you everything I thought was fun, even though Will was gone?”

“Why?” she asks, remembering the moments perfectly.

“Because, even though you didn't know what a friend was; even though you'd never had any kind of social interaction before; even though you tried to change in front of us and had no idea why it was a bad thing, I could see, hidden deep inside you, the personality you have now.”

“Even then?”

“Even then, El. The second you saw Will in that photo, you took it upon yourself to find him. That was the first real hint for me. Then, when I showed you the La-Z-Boy, the smile on your face, and your laugh? El, if you ask me, that's the first moment I cracked you open and saw the true *you*. I knew then that I wanted to do that as much as possible. You trusted me, despite everything that'd been done to you, and that meant so much to me.”

“I knew you were a good person.” she shrugs. “You never forced me to answer things, or pushed me to do anything. Everything was a choice, and I... I really never had that, before.”

“Exactly, El. Yet you still chose to persist, and help us find Will. You knew what was there; you could've refused. You could've left at any moment, but you stayed with me.”

She slowly starts nodding her head; Mike hopes the point is getting across.

“You see what I'm getting at, El?”

She nods again, smiling.

“That kiss in the gym wasn't for nothing, El. Sure it wasn't perfect... the way I lunged at you was pretty stupid, but... after you'd worn yourself out to find Will and then stayed by my side after it... it really clicked in my head that you were special to me.”

He watches as her expression slowly softens; her smile increasing with every second.

“So yeah, when you vanished, after I'd hoped we could do so much together... it broke me. So much.”

Then, she raises her hand, stopping him.

“Don't think about that.” she suggests.

“I just... didn't think there was that much to me, back then. I feel like I was just a tool, still, but... you help me realize that I'm wrong in thinking that.”

“Very wrong, El. Right from the start, you were the most amazing person I'd ever met.”

She smiles wide, before she lets her gaze leave his eyes as she lets her head lean onto his shoulder.

“So were you, Mike.” she insists.

“And now, we don't have to worry, because we've got each-other and we're never separating again.”

Mike smiles wide. “Damn right, we're not.”

Feeling content with Mike's thorough explanations, El finds herself very happy. Never would she have considered herself worthy of being liked, less so loved, back then. But after listening to Mike insist that she's had her traits since they'd met, maybe she can believe it.

Placing a kiss onto his cheek, she smiles gratefully at him. “Thanks, Mike.”

“Always, El.” he promises.

“I love you.”

Hearing those three words always brightens up the moment for her. So with a final smile, she leans her head onto his shoulder again.

“I love you too.”

Author's Note:

Hopeless? Me?
Damn right I am.